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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION APPROVES CONSOLIDATION  
OF OMAHA, ELKHORN, AND GRETNA RATE CENTERS**

LINCOLN – The Nebraska Public Service Commission approved Qwest's application to consolidate its rate centers at Omaha, Elkhorn, and Gretna into one rate center in Omaha during the Commission's August 30 meeting.

The approval will expand the extended area service, or toll-free calling area, for former Gretna and Elkhorn subscribers, and have several other benefits, Third District Commissioner Lowell Johnson of North Bend said.

Johnson, who represents western Douglas County and Sarpy County on the five-member Commission, said, "The consolidation of these three former rate centers into one rate center more conveniently represents the metropolitan nature of the region. It will have a positive impact on consumers as well as on such issues as number conservation and number pooling."

In its ruling, the Commission noted that some changes will be forthcoming in toll charges for carriers that still base toll charges on distance. The biggest impact on the rate center merger, however, may be in making available an additional 101,000 telephone numbers for assignment in the new combined Omaha rate center.

Telephone numbers previously had been assigned in blocks of 10,000, but through efforts of the Public Service Commission and agreement from national administrators, Nebraska numbers in the 402 area code are now assigned in blocks of 1,000. Combining the Omaha, Elkhorn, and Gretna, rate centers will add 101 blocks of 1,000 numbers to pooling efforts, to be assigned at a later time to carriers that request them.

That will help extend the life of the 402 area code which has had its forecasted exhaust date extended several times in recent years through Commission efforts such as rate center consolidation. The Omaha, Elkhorn, and Gretna, rate center consolidation will increase the total number of blocks available for assignment in the Omaha rate center from 159 to 260.

Customers will be able to take their telephone numbers with them when moving anywhere within the expanded geographical territory of the new rate center. The Commission noted that boundary lines of the former rate centers were difficult to distinguish, particularly as they wound through cohesive residential neighborhoods.

The Commission gave Qwest six months after receiving approval of the Federal Communication Commissions to implement the consolidation of the Omaha, Gretna, and Elkhorn rate centers.

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